

Negotiating Familial Ideals through Conversational Narrative: Relationships of Exchange in a Quiteño Family

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Taylor C. Nelms

The Ohio State University
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Project Advisors:

Professor Jeffrey Cohen, Department of Anthropology
Professor Sabra Webber, Department of Comparative Studies

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“Quito, bautizada como la cara de Dios, la ciudad del cielo despejado, azul, y de las ‘noches estrelladas,’ ... [e]s la ciudad de las nubes ...; la ciudad del sol vertical que se abrazó de las montañas y creció larga y angosta, como serpiente. Es la Luz de América, la ciudad para vivir, la ciudad de la Virgen, de las cuatro estaciones en un mismo día, la ciudad Patrimonio, la ciudad de la Mitad del Mundo, y de la Línea Equinoccial. Pero ante todo es la ciudad del volcán ...”

“Quito, christened as the face of God, the city of the clear, blue sky, of ‘starry nights,’ ... is the city of the clouds ...; the city of vertical sunlight that embraced the mountains and grew long and narrow, snake-like. It is the Light of America, the city for living, the city of the Virgin, of four seasons in a single day, the city of Patrimony,¹ city of the Middle of the World, and of the Equator. But before everything it is the city of the volcano ...” (Aguirre, Carrión, and Kingman 2005: 30-31; my translation).

I first came to Ecuador, to the city of the volcano, in 2004, the summer after my sophomore year, planning to study Spanish and “get a feel” for the culture. I was assigned through my Spanish language program to live with Valentina Mendoza de Sol and her son Paulo.² Paulo, or Pau, is thirty, single, a well-educated graphic designer, and like many unmarried Ecuadorians, lives in his parents’ home. Valentina is sixty, devoutly Catholic, separated from her husband, and has two other sons, both older than Pau. During the day I attended classes, returning around noon for a long lunch and again in the early evening. After lunch and dinner, we sat around the table or gathered in the kitchen or living room, and talked. Rather, Valentina and Pau talked; I listened. Pau and Valentina had a rich collection of stories to tell, and I scrambled each night to record many of them in my journal. I learned more than Spanish from Pau and Valentina’s stories. I learned about Pau and Valentina themselves, and about their family. I learned their histories. I learned about their hopes and dreams for the future. Through their stories, Quito, the city of a thousand names, Ecuador, *la Mitad del Mundo*, and the Mendoza family all emerged for me. By the end of the trip, I had amassed not a

travel diary, but a field notebook, the beginnings of a micro-study of one small corner of the world.

I returned to Quito nine months later determined to study more systematically the themes of family, economy and narrative that had been planted in my mind the previous summer and which occupied a central position in my coursework. This project, then, relies on ethnographic data collected over eleven weeks during the summer of 2005, inspired by my initial experiences with the Mendozas. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with twenty members of the Mendoza extended family, totaling over 50 recorded hours and nearly 600 pages of transcription, as well as participant-observation, hundreds of informal conversations, and over two hundred photographs. The vast majority of data collection occurred in and around Quito; two trips were made to the town of Ibarra north of the capital to visit the only one of Valentina's sisters living outside of the capital.

Members of the Mendoza family regularly state that there are "more than fifty" individuals who identify as Mendozas (see Figures 1 and 2). However, this number is somewhat misleading, because in fact there are four branches of the family, descended from four siblings: Domingo Barbosa López (III-1), Galena Barbosa de Mendoza (III-2), Elisa Barbosa de Castellano (III-3), and Ignacio Barbosa López (III-4).³ Only Galena's descendents carry the Mendoza name, from the family of Galena's husband Arturo Mendoza Castellano (III-5). Nonetheless, as we will see, the progenitors of both the López and Mendoza lineages prove to be important in the narrative history of the family, and in the present family identity.

Galena has seven children, one son bracketed by three daughters: Gertrudes (IV-1), Elena (IV-2), Valentina (IV-3), Santiago (IV-4), Eva (or Evita; IV-5), Eldora (usually referred to as Dora or Dorita; IV-6), and Jacky (IV-7). Gertrudes, Elena and Valentina are grandmothers; Santiago is a great-grandfather, making Galena – at 80 years old – a great-great grandmother (see Generations V-VII). Like Valentina, Galena lived much of her later life separated from her husband, and the family life of the Mendozas centers self-consciously around her. I conducted my fieldwork with individuals from within this branch of the family, although their stories naturally extended beyond the boundaries of the Mendoza surname.

This project is fundamentally an ethnographic investigation of Mendoza family identity. It focuses on material and cultural constructions of ideal family roles and relationships fashioned and negotiated through stories told by family members to me and to each other, always in conversation. These conversational constructions – which I later refer to as tropes – discursively define the family and simultaneously structure decision-making. My focus rests on economic decision-making, and I investigate two key tropic constructions: *cariño* (care) and fatherhood. These tropes shape family members' behavior and their relationships with each other. I end with a discussion of the potential for change in these conceptions, detailing temporal transformations in tropes of the ideal father.

Before turning to examples from the Mendoza family, I want to situate my arguments within specific theoretical contexts. The following four sections characterize the scholarly resources that animate and propel my project. First, I examine notions of

conversational narrative and the “event” in folklore and linguistics and then describe the economy/culture dichotomy in anthropology, before proposing that the Mendozas’ notions of *cariño* and *apoyo* (support) point the way toward reconciling this seeming disjuncture in the study of “family” to date.

First Prelude :: Conversation and Narrative

I had decided that I wanted to study the folklore of this middle-class, *mestizo* family, and to record and analyze the stories Valentina and Pau and their relatives told me sitting around the dinner table. However, as a novice fieldworker, I found it difficult to elicit stories about the family merely by asking for them. Even when I was able to elude what I considered “adequate” stories, they felt simulated, artificial, devoid of the verbal art and vibrancy of many of the narratives that can be found in the work of anthropologists and folklorists. They lacked what Deborah Tannen, borrowing from the poet Stevie Smith, calls the “magical power of stories told in conversation – why the talking voice is so sweet” (Tannen 1998: 649).

I came to realize that the difficulty my interlocutors had in furnishing ready-made stories for me lay in the *form* of many of the narratives. First, the majority of the stories I recorded can be defined as conversational narratives, collectively constructed and performed by multiple participants (Norrick 1997, 1998, 2000), but second, in the Mendoza family, stories are rarely told in one sitting as coherent, bounded narratives. For members of the Mendoza family, as for me – a complicit outsider – narratives of family continually emerge over time, fragmented and in bits and pieces.⁴ The first major task of this thesis is to introduce and elucidate the workings of this continual

emergence, and to demonstrate the significance of this amorphous folkloristic form in the construction and negotiation of the economic-cultural logics that define the family and shape individual agencies.

Narratives in Conversation :: Folklore as Interaction

Since at least the 1970s, led by the groundbreaking work of Richard Bauman (1977, 1986), the field of folklore has moved away from an emphasis on collection, text, and tradition towards one on interpretation, context, creativity, and emergence. The development of performance theory by Bauman and others has provided folklorists, linguists, and rhetoricians with the analytical tools to examine the relationship between speech act and social situation, as well as the complex interactions among actors. Bauman (1977) calls for “a conception of verbal art as performance” as a way to transfer attention from text to context and promote a dialectical interpretation of and a focus on the social bases of folklore (3). He is self-consciously indebted to Bateson’s (1972) concept of frame analysis, which is successful in broadening the analyst’s perspective to include more than the individual author (or authors) and singular text (or set of texts). An emphasis on context, “texture,” (Dundes 1964) and the possibility for collective authorship proved to be important in my analysis of the discourse of the Mendoza family.

As I got to know more and more members of the Mendoza family, a running joke emerged, which goes something like this: any time the Mendozas get together, there is no need for a structured interview; I need only turn on the recorder. Indeed, I found it difficult to initiate talk when one-on-one with a family member, but when two or more

of the Mendozas were present, it became impossible to prevent the interview from growing into a complex conversation. Out of these complex conversations emerged stories about family members and in these stories the family detailed and debated the history and identity of the Mendoza family.

Conversational narrative is storytelling that occurs in and through the medium of conversation. According to Norrick (2000/2001), “Conversation typically takes place in face-to-face interaction between two or more participants in real time. The participants generally share roughly equal speaking rights but pursue distinct goals and needs evident in their sometime collaborative, sometime competing voices” (265-266). Narratives in conversation are therefore the result of what Norrick calls “co-narration” (Norrick 1997, 1998, 2000, 2004), the collective production of verbal art by multiple participants. Conversational narrative does not consist of the interaction between one performer and her audience. Instead, all actors are contributors, and all are audience members. The Mendozas regularly engaged in this genre of storytelling, a mode of narrative discourse and verbal artistry that cannot be captured in a simple exchange among individuals, or even in one sitting.

In the Mendoza family, conversational narratives express interpretations of family life. This paper focuses on the form, maintenance, and transformation of particular interpretations present in Mendoza family discourse, but for now, I want to address the production of these narratives. Conversational narratives in the Mendoza family are *emergent* texts. A single, bounded narrative is not necessarily the result of a complete or coherent performance. Moreover, these conversational narratives are an

intertextual and *fragmentary* folk form. In fact, any given performance of a conversational narrative is an incomplete performance; it is indicative of any number of other narratives of which it is a part and to which it necessarily refers. Conversational narratives in the Mendoza family are constitutive of and constituted by other, unspoken narratives and they thus emerge sporadically and in pieces over the long-term.

What we usually call a conversational narrative is a bounded “event” – what Bourdieu would call “occasions” – the spatial and temporal manifestation of a continuous stream of discourse and debate over the past, present, and future of the Mendoza family. While Norrick’s categorization of conversational narratives expands our understanding of the possibilities for creative performance, it is nonetheless tied to this notion of event. However, the event does not delimit the boundaries of narratives in the Mendoza family. Instead, a conversational event like a story told among family members momentarily slows and refracts the movement of narrative discourse in ongoing, recurring, and enduring interactions. The event is a spatio-temporal node in a web of interwoven discursive relationships where conversational flows intersect and narratives accumulate, piling on top of one another to produce what we call the story told in conversation.

In sum, in the Mendoza family, as will become clear at the end of this paper, conversational narratives are the result of collective production of narratives over time in a conversational medium, a chaotic symphony at the dinner table or in the living room. They are *intertextual* (the stories are in conversation with and build upon one another) and *emergent* (they are manifest intermittently in conversational events

separated in time and space). They are also paramount to the formation of family identity, because these conversational narratives assert, maintain, contest, and change conceptions of family roles and relationships.

Second Prelude :: Family and Economy

The stories told in the Mendoza family are not only interesting examples of verbal art or oral literature. They are windows into a corner of Ecuadorian society, and the keys to understanding “family” as conceptualized by the Mendozas. It was clear from the beginning of my time with the Mendozas that it is something of a tautology to affirm the importance of the family. For the Mendozas, it is so self-evident that I encountered some frustration by insisting that they tell me *why*. If I was lucky, an informant might offer up something like, “It’s the fundamental unit of society.” More often I received a shrug and maybe a scowl. But it seemed obvious to me, from the moment I arrived, that “family” was not merely *more* important than what I was used to, but rather, important in a different way, encompassing both economic and cultural logics.

The first summer I lived with Pau and Valentina I learned very little about their extended family, but I was able to formulate a pretty picture of family life in Ecuador, informed primarily by the many stories Pau and Valentina told me sitting around the table after meals. Valentina especially took it upon herself to teach me about “*la familia*.” She explained her role to me the first night I spent in her home. Dizzy and tremulous, fighting for comprehension, I asked in my elementary (even that may be an

exaggeration) Spanish, what she did for a living. Valentina told me that her job, her work, was as a cook, and that her office was the kitchen.

In my journal, I interpreted Valentina's response as "perfect evidence" of the "integrated nature of the family and the economy." In fact, throughout that summer and much of the following year, I saw Pau and Valentina's family as an economic unit. I had this idea that there existed a kind of *overlap* between the familial and economic spheres, that in Ecuador the economic had permeated or penetrated the familial—or, more precisely, that family and the economy had always existed in concert (but not *together*). I found evidence for this notion in what I saw as the inextricable integration of all things family and all things economic: in the uncles and cousins who frequented Pau's business, in the presence of Pau's co-workers during lunch, and in the way Pau and his mother talked about their relationships with their relatives.

When I returned to Quito the following summer, it proved difficult for my interlocutors to separate the economic from the familial. Despite my naïve insistence, the only way they were able to detach the two was by delegating the economic to their occupational domain. My questions about the family economy (*la economía de la familia*) were met with wrinkled brows and confused stares as family members tried to grasp the intent of my inquiry. "I don't understand," Pau's sister-in-law told me one day. "What is the relationship between my job and the family? I work because I need to work, I need the money ... I need to feel productive, but nothing more."⁵ It slowly became clear to me that my questions were confusing because they were misguided: for the Mendozas, the "family economy" is a misnomer. Instead of searching for links

between the two, I should have been attempting to understand how in many ways they signify the same thing. The second goal of this paper is a theoretical one: to show the inadequacy of the presumed independence of the economic and familial spheres and demonstrate how material (economic) and cultural (familial) logics are produced together and relied on simultaneously.

Family vs. Household :: Culture vs. Economy

“Particular care needs to be taken in espousing folk categories, however, for the folk categories in a particular society may not be universally applicable even within it ...” (Hammel 1984: 30).

“Our first task will be to seek an objective, cross-culturally useful definition of the household” (Wilk and Netting 1984: 2).

The 1980s opened with a heralded conference on households, whose findings were published in a 1984 volume edited by Netting, Wilk, and Arnould. The contributors to *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group* attempted to reclaim (or at least “re-fortify”) the “household” as an analytical tool. This collection is a landmark for economic anthropology. The essays contained in it provided researchers with a sturdy and employable framework for investigating what many consider the discipline’s fundamental unit of analysis. As a testament to the important work of the volume, little research since has operated outside of the basic conceptions of “household” and “family” outlined in the collection.

During the groundbreaking conference, issues of emic (“popular” or “folk”) definitions of the household vs. those that are universal or objective took central stage. The anthropologists agreed that in order for it to be analytically useful, any definition of

the household should be universally applicable. They critique “folk” categories of the household as subjective, and thus, “vague and inconsistent” (Wilk and Netting 1984: 1). In their quest for a generalized, empirically verifiable definition, the authors intentionally bracket any non-functionalist or “un-economic” meaning of the household (in its various guises: cultural, symbolic, historical, familial), thus theoretically separating economic concerns and cultural ones. The most common manifestation of this division is the family/household dichotomy, one that draws a great deal of discussion in *Households*.

Despite a collective desire to define the empirical unit, the anthropologists do not agree on a suitable focus for an analysis of the household. Wilk and Netting argue that a universal definition of “household” should focus on “activity” (or function), and then on delineating “morphology” from the organization of a household’s activities (4). For Hammel, defining the household is a matter of good statistics—the analyst should choose the correct sampling frame, “forc[e] events to a lower scale,” and see households “as samples of decisions” (34). Laslett attempts to pry individual interests from those of the social “collective life” of the family (354). Despite a focus on the economics of the household, “culture” continues to be a critical concern. Carter declares his intention to separate the family from the household—the former is marked by “culturally defined relations of birth, adoption, and marriage” and the latter by “shared tasks of production and/or consumption” (45). Two pages later, he writes:

If we are to define the household dimension of domestic groups in terms of culturally recognized tasks, it will be useful as well to distinguish between household structure and household systems and to regard the

former as generated by the latter in conjunction with other cultural systems and in response to variable circumstances (47).

Inconsistencies and rough edges abound, and in the end, no consistent model of the research object (the household) emerges. Hammel's statement about the heterogeneity of "folk categories" (cited above as an epigraph) takes on new meaning in relation to the incongruities of these more "objective" definitions. The inability of anthropologists to agree about what, exactly, *is* the household – especially in relation to the family or culture and when appealing directly to objective empiricism – points clearly to the variability, constructedness, and contingent nature of the term.⁶

If families are treated as collections of discrete, independent economic units (that typically exist as individual households), then exchanges are exogenous to the model and only occur *between* independent entities, instead of being important components of what it means to be family. Secondly, and more importantly, this treatment reifies the family into an autonomous economic unit. The symbolic, cultural, affective, or moral are omitted or seen as external to and separate from (or positioned as reinforcements for) the economic decision-making of family members. The margins of Wilk and Netting's model household – suddenly ubiquitous – come powerfully into focus. Its contours harden: a task-oriented, economically hierarchical, bounded unit.⁷

My point is not that "families" should replace "households" as our unit of analysis, or even that households do not link and build larger social structures (as Foster argues in the 1984 volume). Instead, I want to problematize the concept of families as functional economic units, but without disavowing the economic

dimensions of familial life in favor of interpreting the familial unit as wholly cultural or symbolic. Alone each is a straw man, primed for critique, but they are useful as examples of what I see as an erroneous maintenance of a division between economics/household and culture/family. Those that privilege the latter over the former usually claim a disciplinary connection with cultural studies or Latin American studies, with roots in literary criticism (Sarlo 2002). This research on the Latin American family has generally and paradoxically asserted the significance of the family and often acknowledged its connection to the economic sphere, while overlooking their fundamentally co-constitutive nature.

In 1987, three years after the publication of *Households*, Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur wrote *A Mexican Elite Family 1820-1980: Kinship, Class, and Culture*, one of the first book-length examinations of the uniquely Latin American connection between family and economy. Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur trace the kinship, rituals, and ideology of the Gómez family of Mexico City through history. One of its most recognizable accomplishments is an ethnographic critique of utilitarianism, that mode of “artificially segregating the economy from the rest of social life and endowing it with a kind of autonomy” (12). In their introduction, Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur explain that “[c]ulture is the result of interaction between economic forces and symbolic forces” (14). The attention they pay to the high degree of integration between “kinship interest” and the interests of the family enterprise is admirable, and their argument represents an important step. However, in the end, this emphasis on the *interaction* between two (interpenetrated but ultimately independent) domains belies this argument. The

productive incoherence of *A Mexican Elite Family* exists in the gap between these two domains.

Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur devote large portions of their text to the important delineation of the Mexican grandfamily kinship model and the family enterprise that inevitably accompanies it. They write that, “the fundamental feature of the enterprise is its degree of integration with family life The family serves the enterprise; the power, prestige, and money derived from the enterprise revert to the family” (117). This is a useful conclusion, but one that elides a fundamental lacuna in their theoretical formulation: *the economy and the family remain separate entities, even as their interconnection is emphasized.*

Indeed, studies emphasizing the importance of economic activity in what would have traditionally been dubbed “family life” have become a mainstay of Latin American family and kinship literature. Miles (1994) writes of the work children do to contribute (economically) to their “households” as deriving from the familial admonition of greed (found in stories about the devil). She is not incorrect to situate devil stories as anti-hegemonic (against an individualistic capitalism) and constitutive of family gender roles. However, like Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur, Miles presupposes the division between the material and the cultural, the economic and the familial: “... these stories and their usually hopeful outcomes bring home the message that obligations to family and community are far more important than making good in a workplace or social setting that seeks to marginalize poor people” (137). For Miles, children’s household work

represents an important intersection of family and economy, which she identifies as external to the family (a “workplace” or other “social setting”).

Weismantel (1988, 1995, 2001), throughout her career, has attempted to counter the material/cultural opposition, educing the visceral, often transactional, *and* symbolic meanings of folk life. Addressing kinship ties in Zumbagua, Ecuador, she writes that “[t]he emphasis in kinship studies on a single opposition of nature and culture ... has limited our understanding of real kin relations by restricting the terms of debate” (1995: 697). Weismantel is searching for a way to reconcile two essentialisms that mirror the household/family binary in their reductionism, and she finds it in a “historically informed notion of materiality” (1995: 697). Weismantel attempts to re-claim the material in cultural anthropology through a perspective that assumes the historical *co-constitution* of the material and symbolic qualities of kinship.

Weismantel’s work has not gone without debate. McKinnon’s (1995) critique of Weismantel illustrates the response of many cultural anthropologists whose academic heritage lies with symbolic anthropology. She writes that Weismantel’s argument is contradictory in its affirmation of both culture and nature (that is, the material). However, in McKinnon’s attempt to salvage culture from the precipice of what she sees as a monolithic and irreconcilable vulgarized materialism, she retreats to an understanding that explicitly privileges the cultural and symbolic base of kinship over the material. Like Miles and Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur, she presupposes a separate constitutive status of the cultural and material (natural or economic) bases of society.

On the one hand, if the family is studied economically, it is done so at the level of the reified household, without constitutive inclusion of historical, affective, or other factors. On the other hand, if the family itself – as a cultural unit of analysis – has been studied, the research has omitted economic and material variables. Treating the family as a group of discrete decision-making bodies or as synecdochic cultural institution limits how “family” can be defined, and merely reinforces etic boundaries between “economic” and “cultural” (or “material” and “symbolic”; “household” and “family”; or “economic” and “affective”) that we know are (very often) imposed by anthropologists. As Weismantel and others have argued, we are not required to choose between nature and culture, economics and symbolism, household and family. These are false dichotomies.

Family – for Pau, Valentina, and the entire Mendoza family – is not penetrated by a hegemonic capitalism, or even incorporated into some sort of alternative economic system. Instead, in my observations, the economic, the affective, the historical, and the familial are inextricably connected. Each is immanent in all the others, and should be studied as such. I hope I have demonstrated the disadvantages of a treatment of the family that presupposes a separation of economy and culture; through my ethnographic work with one middle-class family in Quito, Ecuador, I hope to propose a new understanding of family: as contingent, dynamic, and tropic.

Tropes :: (of the) Family

Strictly speaking, a trope is a figure of speech: any word or phrase used in a nonliteral sense. The term is etymologically Greek; *tropos* means a “turn.” In this sense,

a trope could mean a “turn” away from literal meaning, and towards a constructed, conceptual link between significations. Such a tropic turn accomplishes a transformation of meaning, and is only understood through comprehension of the (connotative) connection between the constituent parts of the tropic apparatus. Various common figures of speech (such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) are often considered types of tropes. However, a trope is all of these and more; broadly, it is a constitutive conceptual apparatus.

The use of tropes can be understood as a process of rendering the unfamiliar in familiar terms (or vice-versa). Tropes compose and embody relationships, organizing the interactions between the semiotic signifier and the semiotically signified (Silverman 1983)—as well as between human actors. For linguists like Roman Jakobson, tropes are paramount to communication (Jakobson and Halle 1956). Hayden White (1978) explains that abstractions are concretized through tropes, so that the relationship defined by the trope exists between human consciousness and worldly experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) go further to argue that tropes (and specifically metaphors) structure the very way we understand and move through our world, that our epistemological framework is metaphorical in nature. However, a tropic theory of reality does not see tropes as somehow mediating or translating what is real, some universally objective truth. Instead truth and reality are “always relative to a conceptual system” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 159), with tropes at the interface of understanding. Tropes and relationships build on each other to constitute rhetorical codes, the use of which

supports and sustains the shared (or imposed) assumptions of a discourse community, social group, or culture.

A tropic understanding of family means that family members rely on tropes they themselves discursively construct to define the different properties of a familial reality, and to delineate family ideals and values. I must be completely clear: I am intentionally stretching the definition of trope. Instead of a general category of figurative language, I use trope to mean a nonliteral, loaded, and evocative conceptual and rhetorical construct that structures family members' realities. Moreover, they constitute and are constituted in family relationships. Specifically, I have decided to use the terminology of tropes for three reasons:

First, it allows me to collapse material and cultural logics – to obviate an artificial rupture between the economic and the familial. As I detail below, the dominant trope of *cariño* (“care” or “affection”) arranges all family relationships under a rubric of love *and* exchange, economic and familial logics. Because they bring together what are commonly considered discrete social domains, my use of tropes is meant to counter an objective, empirical, and economic notion of the family/household while not ignoring or denying the important economically motivated discourse and behavior of family members. Thus, a reliance on tropic analysis does not mean a retreat to immaterial symbolism. A tropic theory of family treats “family” as an aesthetic-discursive construct – *but one with very real implications*.

Second, tropes imply a choice among various significations. As White (1978) explains, “tropes are deviations ... swerves in locution ... not only *from* one possible,

proper meaning, but also ... *towards* another meaning, conception, or ideal of what is right and proper *and true*" (2; emphasis in original). Tropes in the family represent constructed *ideals* that are meant to be persuasive. They are interpretations of the past that define the present and shape and prescribe the future. The family's use of these tropic touchstones masks and foregrounds – conceals and reveals – specific constructions of family. In the second section of this paper, I turn my attention to one particular ideal family trope: the trope of paternalism, a changing idealized (and female) interpretation delineating the role and attendant relationships of the father in the Mendoza family.

Third, as constructions or negotiations, tropes always possess the potential for *change*. Tropes have an inherent aesthetic dimension in the *play* associated with the "swerve" away from denotation. Because they are profoundly connected to the verbal artistry of conversational narrative in the Mendoza family, family members can make and remake tropic conceptions through their conversational narratives. Thus, tropes work with and point to the Mendozas' hopes, dreams, and even fears for the family. In the Mendoza family, ideal tropes are "always-already" on the table, bubbling up constantly, as resources to be utilized in crafting the focus of continually emergent narratives, and are constantly reaffirmed, reinforced, debated, contested, and negotiated whenever and wherever they arise in conversation. In short, the tropic identity of the Mendoza family is discursively embodied and transformed in conversational narratives.

A Dominant Trope :: Cariño y Apoyo

One way to grasp the role of tropes in the family is to view them through a co-productionist lens, that is, to see the cultural concept of the family, framed by tropic discourse, and the “actual” or “material” family, knowledge of the “objective” actions of family members, as produced simultaneously (i.e. co-produced). This framework has surfaced out of the important work in science studies addressing the concurrent manufacture of scientific knowledge and social order (e.g. Reardon, 2005; Jasanoff, 2004). However, it applies equally well to the problem of the household/family binary: *the logics and rhetorics of family and economy are co-produced in conversational narrative*. As such, family members use a single tropic terminology and conceptual framework to organize both. Instead of attempting to separate an objective (material) household on the one hand and a subjective (cultural) family on the other, a co-productionist perspective sees these as emerging together in conversational narratives. This section introduces the trope of family that structures this simultaneous emergence.

It is important to note that in this perspective familial discourse and in particular, the stories people tell are as important as their actions. There is no singular, inevitable material base for idealized, tropic conceptions of family or the conversational narratives that facilitate their construction. In other words, family members’ continued use of this tropic framework is not determined solely by a functionalist or utilitarian drive. Instead, the persuasiveness of the co-productionist perspective is its ability to capture the concurrent constitution of cultural relationships and economic decision-making and their ability to structure one another and shape family roles, relationships, and identity.

This structuring and shaping, however, occurs very much in the particularities of daily life among the Mendozas in Quito. The city lies between two long *cordilleras* – mountain ranges – that bound its lateral growth. Long and skinny, in some places it takes less than a half an hour to walk its width. The city reaches its fingers into *las faldas* – literally the skirts – of the mountains, testing the margins of public utilities and altitude, but primarily, the urban planning history of Quito has been one of north-south expansion. During my two-summer stay, I lived in El Batán, a traditionally wealthy neighborhood that used to lie at the outskirts of the city, but which has been engulfed by northward suburban growth. It is now situated alongside the heart of Quito’s modern shopping and business district.

Take the bus south from El Batán past rows of colorful low-rise buildings – imbrications of shops, restaurants, and residences – past the Olympic Stadium, through the tourist district – with the profusion of English-language signs and Internet cafes – into El Centro Histórico – the city’s colonial center, marked by period architecture and the distinctly Spanish orthogonal network of roads and alleys. Disembark at the station furthest south, wind your way through the confusion of buses and pedestrians, up a steep hill into a quiet neighborhood of brick streets and decaying buildings. This is La Tola, one of Quito’s oldest neighborhoods. Down the street from the bakery and the warm smell of rising bread drifting from its racks, is an unremarkable wooden door, tan paint peeling from its surface, which leads to a small, second-floor apartment.

In this tiny apartment I spoke with Galena, Valentina’s mother, Pau’s grandmother, and the matriarchal head of the Mendoza family. In the stories Galena

told me – about her life and those of her predecessors – I realized the insufficiencies of a model of straightforward incorporation of the economic into the familial and of assuming the independence of the material and cultural domains. In Galena's words I found something much more intense and dramatic. This was perhaps never clearer to me than when one day while talking about motherhood Galena began to cry.

It was the first time I sat down to interview Galena. When I asked her what was most important in her life, she told me that nothing was more important than her children: "it has not mattered to me to not have money; instead it has been my family that has filled me."⁸ She continued, telling me that she has not been able to give (*regalar*) enough to her children. When she began to cry, her daughters Jacky and Gertrudes stood and went to her side. Jacky knelt beside her aging mother and comforted her. "Mami," she said, "you have given us so much."⁹

"Mira," Galena said to me, with tears in her eyes. "Look. Look at what my children have given me. Look how they help me, how they care for me."¹⁰

My first summer in Quito I might have seen this story as an example of the overlap between the familial and economic spheres, but clearly Galena's emotion is not only a reflection of the importance of money. What is at work here is a deep affective bond between mother and children. However, it is expressed in the rhetoric of exchange. The relationship between Galena and her children is described by them as one of giving, of "help," but the emotional connection takes place in the familial sphere, not the economic.

Family members often use the word *cariño* to describe their relationships in the family.¹¹ *Cariño* means “care” or “affection,”¹² and it is regularly “given” (in Spanish, *dar*, or *regalar*)¹³ from one family member to another, “had” or “held” (*tener*) by one family member for another, or just as often “shared” (*compartir*) between them. When I ask Valentina what “the most important aspect of family” is, she tells me, “All [of us] share, it’s clear that there is *cariño* between everyone. There is understanding because there are momentary disagreements, but they are overcome. When there is *cariño* everything is overcome.”¹⁴

Cariño is a general category for powerful emotional goods that are exchanged within the family. However, the concept of *cariño*, of the care that exists between family members, extends to material goods as well. In order to illustrate that *cariño* existed between her and her uncle, Valentina relies on examples of her uncle’s (Domingo, Galena’s older brother) “generosity,” how he paid for her to go to the movies or the circus. However, when I ask her how she “knew” that he cared for her, she merely states that she “felt” (*sentir*) it. In relationships like this one, family members are not merely exchanging material goods; they are exchanging *cariño*.

If *cariño* is the “good” exchanged among family members, *apoyo* (support) is the sum of those exchanges. Rhetorically, *apoyo* is a primary way family members define “family.” However, in the minds of family members, *apoyo* is the purpose for family — that is, what family *does*. Pau is quite specific: “I believe that family is *apoyo*.”¹⁵ In a family, people support (*apoyar*) each other through gifts and exchanges of *cariño*.

Thus, in many ways, family *means* exchange; familial relationships *are* exchange relationships. However, the opposite is also true: exchange, in the familial context, is not *a part* of family, but *signifies* it. Exchanges of what we would see as affective goods clearly contribute to the basis of family (they are both *cariño* and *apoyo*); however, exchanges of what we would call material goods (money, food, labor) are understood as exchanges of *cariño* and as contributions to *apoyo*. *All* family relationships are exchange relationships, and *all* exchanges – material and affective – are structured by this dual trope: all are characterized as transactions of *cariño*, and all contribute to the web of *apoyo* that defines the family.

Cariño does not “stand in” for a rhetoric of exchange. *Cariño* is a trope precisely because it defines multi-layered and multi-vocalic relations among members of the Mendoza family. Its definitional “swerve” exists in the distance it takes from a monolithic or “pure” reliance on any material or emotional domain. It folds family and economy into one in such a way that they are not meant to be split; a relationship of *cariño* signifies simultaneously a material and affective relationship. It is thus purposively vague: it possesses numerous referents.¹⁶ Family relationships are complex and messy, organized as they are by this versatile trope. Decision-making within the family is a complicated process of negotiation. However, despite this ambiguity, for family members, *cariño* is not an abstract notion – it is real and tangible. Through *cariño*, abstract family relationships become concrete.

By viewing the family through the lens of *cariño*, we can see that it is *both* a collection of economic units exchanging money *and* concurrently familial ones

exchanging love. Monetary transactions are actually transfers of affective goods, and vice versa. It's not just that exchange permeates the family, or that love is subordinate to the logic of economics. Money (or other forms of capital) *is* love, love *is* money (both are *cariño*) in the same way that exchange *is* family, and family is exchange (both are *apoyo*). Hence, when family members discuss what we might see as economic exchanges, they are actually talking about the essence of familial relationships. We can therefore understand idealized family roles and relationships by looking at family conversational narratives about exchanges within the family.

The Work of a Trope :: A Changing Paternalism

As a dominant trope, *cariño* structures all family relationships, collapsing economic and affective logics of the family into a single, if multifaceted, dimension. When family members share stories about their interactions with each other, they continually reaffirm (and renegotiate, as we'll see later) this *ideal* conception of family – as a web of *apoyo*, crisscrossed by flows of *cariño*. By telling such stories, family members aspire to this ideal.¹⁷

However, family members aspire to other ideals, and the stories they relate to each other generate additional tropic conceptions of family. One “collection” of stories centers on father figures in the history of the Mendoza family.¹⁸ These narratives do not necessarily arise together in conversation, but do indirectly allude to one other. Together, they represent an ongoing conversation – and at times a debate – about the role of the father in the familial drama, resulting in a contested and dynamic model of family relations which delineates a changing ideal of paternalism.

Galena, the oldest member of the Mendoza branch, vaguely recalls her grandparents, but never told me a story about an individual living before them. The “oldest” story that Galena told me is about her grandfather, whom she never knew. Diego Nicolás Lopez Jacinto was an orphan, his parents killed in an earthquake in the provincial town of Ibarra. However, both his mother and father came from wealthy families, and as a result, Nicolás was able to obtain a decent education. He became “*un profesor*” in Ibarra, which doesn’t necessarily mean “schoolteacher,” but instead is often a title for an educated man.¹⁹ He married Milagros Valenzuela Cordero, also from a wealthy family, when she was fourteen years old (he was twenty) and they had six children. Nicolás devoted his time to educating himself, and at the age of thirty-three, he became governor of the province of Ibarra. A little over two weeks later, he was dead, killed by a political rival who injected Nicolás with a poison that “disintegrated” his intestines.²⁰

Galena’s grandmother Milagros was left at the age of twenty-seven without a husband and without a means of supporting herself and her children. However, her parents “*tenían bastante plata*” (had plenty of silver; that is, were from a traditionally wealthy family), and they provided for their daughter and grandchildren. Moreover, Galena emphasized, Milagros was still part owner of the family’s hacienda, a source of great wealth and status.²¹

Milagros raised her six children to the best of her ability, and was praised as a mother. Her second child and oldest son was Diego Lopez Valenzuela, who traveled to Quito to enroll in high school. As Galena puts it, “he also followed the same ideas of my

grandfather and tried to better himself.”²² Soon after his graduation, Milagros sold her portion of the hacienda in order to allow her son to travel to Germany and study. Diego left the university and returned to Ecuador with Europe’s best printing technology. He opened Quito’s first commercial printing press and a bookstore. This business quickly became a family enterprise, with siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews all working for Diego.

This story of Nicolás’ death, Milagros’ gift to her oldest son, and Diego’s success is in many ways a centerpiece of Mendoza history, and reveals an important ideal trope of the family. It was repeated to me at least three times more or less in full, and its different episodes form stories that can be told separately. By telling this story, Galena promotes in her own descendants a specific and contingent conception of the father and this conception’s attendant modes of behavior. However, as we will see, despite its importance as a central trope in the Mendoza family, this construction of fatherhood is by no means a homogenous one.

The Ideal. The transaction between Milagros and Diego is the “first exchange” in the narrative history of the Mendoza family. Diego receives a major endowment from his mother, makes good on that investment, and is able to support not only his mother, but his siblings (who did not receive the same kind of support), his children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Diego is perhaps the most important male character in the family’s history: he was wealthy, accomplished, and powerful, but in all of Galena’s stories, he is first and foremost a member of the

family – a devoted father and superior son. This is *the ideal of paternalism*: a father (actual and symbolic) cares for and supports an entire lineage.

According to the stories told by Galena, Valentina, and others, a “good father” – or what I will call a paternal icon – like Diego supports (*apoyar*) economically and affectively his parents (specifically his mother) and his siblings and their children, as well as his own direct kin. In other words, the paternal icon engages in both vertical (children/parents) and horizontal (siblings/partners) transfers of *cariño*, supporting those above, below and beside him on the genealogical tree. The first step in the making of a paternal icon is clearly the maternal gift, which structures an ongoing pattern of exchange between mother and son.

In order to “repay” this maternal investment, a son must succeed in his chosen profession. In a way, over the course of my research, the telling of Diego’s many accomplishments became a narrative in and of itself. They were listed for me by multiple family members in numerous conversations in a variety of contexts. The structural and affective similarities of the various tellings are clear: the rote-ness of the delivery, the formulaic arrangement of achievements – first the significance of his business (the first printing press in Quito), then the extent of his wealth, after that his multiple governmental posts (he served as minister twice), his many friends and acquaintances among the Quiteño elite, the school named after him, his dedication to Quito and its inhabitants (to the poorest of whom he often gave his entire monthly salary), and so on – and always the same excitement, the obvious enjoyment family members receive from telling me about their wealthy and renowned “tío.”

The same sort of “listing” also occurs when family members discuss the brothers Domingo and Ignacio Barbosa Lopez. Domingo and Ignacio are the two sons of Catalina, Diego’s sister, and the brothers of Galena and Elisa, Catalina’s fourth child. It might have been the case that during Diego’s time, entrepreneurial enterprise was the preferred arena of success for a man, and especially a paternal icon. This preference is reported by Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur (1987) to be very powerful in the Gómez family of Mexico City. However, although Domingo and Ignacio were both quite wealthy, neither were entrepreneurs per se. Both were musicians, “the best Ecuadorian composers” according to family members. Their musical accomplishments are listed in the same way as Diego’s more traditional (entrepreneurial and governmental) successes. Domingo, originally a guitarist, graduated from of the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in Quito and later founded and directed the guitar program there. He composed and arranged many of Ecuador’s most famous symphonies. He was a member of the National Symphonies of Ecuador and Colombia, founded and directed various well-recognized choruses, including that of the Casa de la Cultura. He traveled throughout the world (South and Central America, Europe and the United States) competing in various competitions (and winning many). His younger brother Ignacio graduated from the Conservatorio as a pianist. Ignacio also spend time outside of Ecuador, in particular in Guatemala and Mexico, and finally resided in Guayaquil, where he continued to compose orchestral and piano music and arrange compositions for the leading Ecuadorian recording company IFESA until his death. The rhythmic

repetition of these achievements marks most of the narratives about Diego, Domingo, and Ignacio.²³

The enumeration of individual accomplishments has at least two important outcomes: first, the establishment of the subject as a self-sufficient, hard-working individual and second, the provision of a discursive foundation from which stories of support, help, and the exchange of *cariño* can spring. For our immediate purposes, the latter is the more relevant consequence, but mere success does not a paternal icon make. However, nor does only “repaying” one’s mother. A paternal icon’s discursive formation rests upon the care and support he furnishes for his siblings and their families.

Diego’s care for his sister Catalina (Galena’s mother) and her children is clear from Galena’s stories:

Who helped her [Catalina] quite a bit was my uncle Diego Lopez. He helped her. So there were four of us, but when my mother was about to have the fourth child, my uncle told her that she won’t work anymore because she had to attend to her family ... she had her monthly rent secure, he gave it to us. In order to educate us, for example, for me primary school until the second course of secondary school when I married, my uncle Diego gave us the tools, he gave us what was necessary. To my brother too.²⁴

She says that Diego “helped” (*ayudar*) her family, and that he “gave what was necessary” (*dar lo necesario*) to them. Although Galena emphasizes Diego’s impact on her own family, his “help” extended beyond these boundaries: “He gave to everyone. He paid for a house for each of my uncles and my aunts as well. He didn’t manage to do this with my mother.”²⁵

Notice the language used by Galena. Only twice does she use terminology specifically implying money, first when she mentions *mensual*, directly translated as “monthly” but referring to rent, and secondly when she uses the word *remunerar*, which can be translated as remunerate, pay, or (perhaps most appropriately) reward. And despite Diego’s inability to purchase a house for Catalina, Galena still states that “thanks to my uncle, we have managed to survive ...”.²⁶ While *cariño* is not explicitly invoked in this passage, its presence is felt nonetheless, in Galena’s depiction of Diego’s clear devotion to the families of his siblings. It is this devotion, support, and help – in a word, again, *cariño* – that transforms a successful, generous man into a paternal icon. He becomes a father figure for his extended family. Galena could not be more direct: “So he assumed the position of a father for the family.”²⁷

Diego, according to Galena, took a special interest in Galena’s mother Catalina. Catalina’s two sons Domingo and Ignacio were both situated to become paternal icons for this branch of the family. Domingo quickly became Diego’s favorite. Galena explains: “He [Diego] loved my brother a lot, he admired the compositions that he made. He even invited him to play his guitar in concerts at his [Diego’s] house.”²⁸ When Domingo enrolled in the high school his uncle attended, for one reason or another, it didn’t suit him and he didn’t fare well. With his uncle’s encouragement, he transferred to the Conservatorio, and “there pursued music. So, because this was his passion, he graduated from there. He graduated very young.”²⁹

Domingo succeeded with his uncle’s support. According to Galena, Ignacio followed his brother into music. He also succeeded, but with the encouragement and

assistance of his brother, not of Diego. Ideally, from the etic perspective, there might be only one paternal icon per generation. Only one father figure for an entire lineage best fits the metaphor. At times, Galena states that both her brothers helped her and her children: “[My mother] survived with the help of my uncle Diego and after [his death] with the help of my brothers also.”³⁰ At other times, she singles out Domingo specifically as providing a great amount of support. In one conversation, she explains how she was able to pay for a series of debilitating injuries and diseases: “What can I say? When my daughters were children and they didn’t have a way to contribute for my diseases ... [Domingo gave me] everything, my brother. My brother Dominguito helped me in the operations.”³¹

Interestingly, Galena’s daughters dispute this point. When Galena tells me that her brother helped pay for important medical procedures (although notice that Galena again avoids using any word that specifies a transfer of actual money), Valentina quickly corrects her mother, leaning over the coffee table to say, loudly enough for her mother to hear, “Ignacio.” Galena, ignoring her, continues, asserting, “I never had a single pill from my husband. That is to say, for one of my treatments ... no, never. It was my brother, my brother.”³² And then, as if to reconcile the two (or correct both of them), Gertrudes (Galena’s first-born), exclaims, “the two of them. Both.” The conversational medium furnishes an environment for debate and negotiation. The paternalistic mantle shifts from brother to brother depending on the speaker and to this day their statuses are debated in conversation. However, although Ignacio is no doubt understood at times to be a sort of symbolic father, it was Domingo who was

established as the primary paternal icon of his generation. Pau perhaps best explains the difference between Domingo and Ignacio:

I think Domingo was the paternal figure and Ignacio was like an older brother for my mother and her siblings. Although both of them were very good and supported the family, there was also a difference in age of almost 12 years between the two, and so Domingo could be a paternal figure more than Ignacio. Also I think this because my mother says that Domingo supported them with their education and food, but it was Ignacio who bought them ice cream and sweets, or drove them around in his car ... that is, the fun things.³³

Parts of Pau's explanation reappear in the words of other family members and it does seem to me that Domingo is generally regarded as a stronger paternal icon than his younger brother.³⁴ Valentina in particular has fond memories of Domingo's care and support, bolstered by the fact that Domingo was her *padrino*, or godfather: "he was like a second father [to me], in every respect. ... I remember I was very dear to him as a child."³⁵ Godfathers in Latin America play significant roles in the lives of their godchildren.³⁶ Valentina is explicit about her relationship with Domingo, and in fact it is in her words that Domingo's status as paternal icon takes its fullest and most overt shape:

TN: So, the relationship between Domingo and you was a relationship of *cariño*, of love?

Valentina: Of *cariño*, especially, yes. Because my uncle had special *cariño* for me.

TN: How did you know [he had] this *cariño*?

Valentina: I knew. I felt this *cariño*. ... So I felt that I received more fatherly *cariño* from my uncle because my father worked far away possibly, and my uncle was closer and as I was his niece, he didn't reprimand me but only gave me *cariño* and when he could he was also very generous. You remember that Gertrudes said that he gave to us for the movies, to go to the circus. My uncle who passed away [Ignacio] took

us for rides [in his car]. My uncle Domingo, as he was my godfather, also assumed the role of second father.³⁷

Notice, first, the interplay between the rhetoric of exchange and of emotion in Valentina's statements; she first says she "felt" Domingo's *cariño*, and then says she "received" it and that he "gave" it to her. Valentina is the only family member who unequivocally categorizes Domingo as a "second father." At other times, other family members said he was "like a father" (*como un padre*), but Valentina's statements are the clearest, probably because of her "special" relationship with Domingo. As Valentina's godfather, Domingo has customary roles and duties to fulfill, the most important of which is a continuous caring support (financial and emotional) for his goddaughter.

The actual form of Diego and Domingo's *cariño* (or *ayuda*—help) is often left unclear.³⁸ It is implied, although never stated overtly, that actual money is exchanged. Valentina explains how for a time, her grandmother Catalina (apparently with money from Diego) and her uncles Domingo and Ignacio supported Galena, her husband, and their children: "... my grandmother maintained my mother and father ... when we were far away my grandmother send money. My uncles the same."³⁹ However, this is one of the few times that the word for money (*dinero*) is specified.

There are times that the particulars of the story require that the narrator be specific about the form of *cariño* exchanged. Pau related to me a conversation with his grandmother Galena, in which she told him that, as a "gift" (*regalo*), Diego bought a new house for each of his siblings, except for Galena's mother Catalina. Diego saw Catalina's husband as irresponsible, and

... thought that if Catalina had a new house, her husband would sell it immediately. He gave her money for a business (a store), so that she and her children could work. The store lasted some years, and was a good business ... at the end of each year, Catalina divided the earnings among her four children (Domingo, Ines, Ignacio, and Galena). And in the end, the store was sold to buy land that was divided in four parts also, one for each child.⁴⁰

In this case, the details of the story itself divulge the form of *cariño* passed from Diego to his family. For Catalina, Diego's *cariño* took the form of a business and thus indirectly, employment.

In fact, employment is often invoked as a medium for *cariño*. Galena frequently speaks of the jobs Diego provided for family members. Both Catalina and Gertrudes, Galena's firstborn daughter and Diego's niece, worked for a time in his business. Of course, the meaning of "work" is flexible, as indicated by Galena: "My uncle Diego even gave a job to my daughter Gertrudes. She worked there in the bookstore and my uncle always distinguished [privileged] my daughter. Because when he saw, for example, that she wanted to sweep the part of the office where she worked ... he said, 'This isn't your job, child. This belongs to the [domestic] employee.'" ⁴¹ While Gertrudes could certainly contribute to her great-uncles business in ways other than cleaning, it is clear her position in the printing press is a manifestation of Diego's *cariño*.

Much of the time, paternalistic support (and *cariño*) takes the shape of goods specifically associated with survival: shelter, food, clothing, etc. Valentina describes the support her great-uncle Diego gave her mother Galena (via Catalina): "My grandmother gave us everything: food, housing ... we never lacked food or clothing."⁴² This emphasis on "need" is often echoed by her mother and sisters, who frequently

refer to *lo necesario* — “what was/is necessary” or “the necessities.” Indeed, as quoted above, Galena has asserted that only with the help and care of her uncle and sons, has her family been able to survive.⁴³

The concept of paternalism is also captured in the family’s discourse about *herencia*, or “inheritance,” which arises most often *not* when talking about wealth, but as a way to account for a family member’s character or innate abilities, such as music. In my conversations with family members, any mention of Domingo or Ignacio was accompanied by an affirmation of their musical proficiency, and often, of their musical heritage. When I inquired about the importance of music to the family, Gertrudes and Valentina both chimed in. “[Music is] what you carry here inside,” Gertrudes said.

“It is feeling. It is an inheritance,” Valentina added.

At my puzzled look, Galena explained further: “It is an inheritance because my grandfather knew how to play the *charango*, an instrument that is like the guitar but smaller. An uncle of his was a composer of music ... So my brothers [Domingo and Ignacio] inherited that, [but] first my mother. She played the guitar beautifully, and the *bandolín*. I have a photo of my mother with the guitar when she was fifteen years old.”⁴⁴

Galena and other family members describe music (as well as other intrinsic or natural qualities, like good humor) as an inheritance, a sort of biological gift, passed down from generation to generation. In this way, the inheritance of musical ability satisfies the logic of exchange: Domingo and Ignacio *were given* their talent. And importantly, the individual bestowing this gift was their mother Catalina: “my brothers inherited the love of music from my mother.”⁴⁵ Like in the story of the “first exchange”

between Diego and his mother, Catalina bequeaths a gift, her sons make good on that gift, and then care for and support her and their siblings.

It is important to realize that despite the discussion above, the different “forms” *are* cariño itself, not merely the vehicles for it. These are equivalencies: cariño *is* money/labor/necessities/inheritance, just as all of these *are* cariño. Similarly, the trope of cariño is not a trope in the literary sense – cariño is not a metaphor. As emphasized earlier, cariño, while a trope and an ideal, is not an abstract entity. It is involved in very real exchanges, with very real (emotional and economic) consequences.

Change. Whatever the form of the narrative, paternalistic transactions of cariño dominate discussion about historical fathers in the Mendoza family past. However, this changes when family members talk about father figures *in the present*. Although family members continue to assert that men in the family are “good fathers,” they do not emphasize the horizontal exchanges of cariño that are so ubiquitous in stories about Diego, Domingo and Ignacio. It’s not merely that the fathers themselves have changed. The idealized conception of what makes a “good father” has changed as well.

Figure 3 shows a kinship map of the Mendoza family, with three father figures circled in red. The first two are Diego and Domingo. The third is Galena’s only son, Santiago. Figure 4 shows the relative flow of exchanges – horizontal in blue, vertical in red – as reflected in the discourse of family members.⁴⁶ Instead of contributing horizontally – exchanging cariño with his siblings – according to family members, Santiago contributes almost completely to his direct family, primarily by providing employment.

There are many examples of fathers in Santiago's generation, but they married into the family, and so Santiago will stand in for the "next" paternal icon. Santiago is a successful entrepreneur, much like Diego, although to a lesser degree. His small business selling labels employs nearly all of his children and their spouses. As his wife Fortuna explains, "[Santiago] directs the business and also is the support for his children in all areas."⁴⁷ However, despite his devotion to his wife and children, he is clearly somewhat separated from his extended family. I never saw him during my six months living with the Mendozas, and family members sometimes admit in private that while there is no conflict between Santiago and his siblings, he attends to his own family, and not those of his sisters. Indeed, many of the Mendozas often attribute Santiago's absence at many family events to the fact that he has "a large family of his own" for which he must care.

Let me return for a moment to Galena's story, which began this section on the ideal of paternalism. Nicolás and his son Diego furnish an interesting contrast. Nicolás is an orphan; although he is never wanting economically, he grows up without the support of his parents, a severe disadvantage. However, Galena emphasizes his success. She repeats that Nicolás was "self-educated" (*autoeducado*), and that despite being an orphan, he was able to become an erudite and successful man. He was, to put it bluntly, a self-made man.⁴⁸ On the other hand, although Diego also devotes himself to his own education, the emphasis in Galena's telling rests squarely on Milagros and her gift, which allows him to continue his studies in Germany and, more importantly, to return

to Ecuador, start a successful business, and then of course provide for his relatives in a manner which exemplifies the ideal of paternalism.

Nicolás the self-made man is situated as a sort of foil to Diego's pater. The ability to succeed is important in all the narratives of paternalism, but the emphasis on Nicolás' ability to overcome overwhelming odds is unique. However, I did hear the trope of the self-made man used at other times, first in reference to Diego, and then to Santiago. Before I spoke to any of the older members of the Mendoza family, I talked with Pau, Valentina's thirty-year old son, about his perceptions of his family's forebears. Pau repeated many of the same themes I would later hear from Galena, Valentina, and other family members: he listed the accomplishments of Domingo, Ignacio, and Diego, and he stressed their status as paternal icons and the *cariño* they had for their family. Surprisingly however, the emphasis Pau placed on the ability of especially Diego to prevail over difficulty – to educate himself and be successful – mirrors the kind of discourse that surrounds Galena's treatment of Nicolás. For Pau, Diego is a self-made man.⁴⁹

Moreover, it is this same trope that arises in stories about Santiago told by his wife Fortuna. When I asked Fortuna to describe her husband, she proceeded to list his achievements – educational, occupational – just like other family members do for Diego, Domingo, and Ignacio. However, there is no mention of a maternal gift that makes such successes possible. Instead, the focus is clearly on Santiago as an individual:

Well, I can tell you one thing, that my husband was always a man, that is, he always will be a very responsible man ... So he has always been a very enterprising, hard-working, and responsible man, who from the time he

was a child, he knew what it is to work. He has held very good positions because he has worked in management.⁵⁰

According to Fortuna, Santiago succeeded because of his hard work and sense of responsibility. His success allows him to support his children. Valentina informed me several times that Fortuna was “like a sister” to her and her siblings, but of course, part of Fortuna’s perspective could be influenced by her status as an in-law. However, this doesn’t diminish the fact that she seems to have seized on kernels from the Mendoza family history to construct Santiago as a different kind of father in the manner of the self-made man.

In sum, Santiago (and perhaps other future fathers in the Mendoza family) need not engage in horizontal exchanges of *cariño* to be considered a good father.

Accompanying this change is a shift in discourse about father figures, from paternal icons to self-made men. However, causation isn’t readily apparent. One factor is economic difficulty. After Ecuador transferred its economy to the US dollar in 2000, the subsequent price inflation and cash flow restriction resulted in economic hardship for many families throughout the middle and lower classes (Beckerman and Solimano 2002). In this changing economic environment, fathers do not accumulate the capital necessary to engage in the paternalistic exchanges of the past. However, I do not mean to say that material need determined changes in the trope of paternalism. Following the framework of co-production, in which the material and discursive realms arise simultaneously and thus are immanent in one another, this new ideal trope of the father has emerged both from economic constraints *and* narrative negotiation of fatherly roles.

Economic need could not have guaranteed a shift in the idealized conception of fatherhood, even if it played a role. In any case, what is clear is that the trope of paternalism has changed, and is now limited to a father's direct lineage.

Contemporary Tropes. There are other idealized conceptions of family relationships that are becoming more prevalent in today's discourse and discourse about the future, and are less associated with the family's past. This section of the paper is not meant to be comprehensive. Instead, by briefly reviewing some of the alternative visions of family, I hope to give some sense as to the heterogeneity of the ideal Mendoza family.

The first is a discourse of fatherhood that opposes both the trope of paternalism and that of the self-made man. Clearly, not all fathers can fit into one of these two tropic roles. While not all of those who do not fit are considered "bad" fathers, there are stories of those men who are the discursive antithesis of a caring and supportive father. Galena's father appears to be one such man. The various stories that circulate in the family about Cesar Barbosa Almodovar usually focus on his infidelity. In a common joke, Cesar is asked how many children he has. He responds by answering, "*Cincuenta*" (fifty). "'So many, grandfather?' And he would say, 'No, it's that I haven't counted how many children I have, *sin cuenta* [countless].'"⁵¹

"*Verá*, my father had children wherever he went," Galena explained to me one day. "He was a very kind person, personally very handsome. But what happened is that he was also desirous of women. And he always had children everywhere. Wherever I went, they would say to me, 'I'm your sister.' That is, we had siblings everywhere."⁵²

Valentina is more direct: “He was bigamous, my grandfather.”⁵³ In many ways, there could not be an act more contradictory to the ideals of fatherhood outlined above. In the cases of Diego, Domingo, Ignacio, and Santiago, fatherhood is defined by the care and support of one’s family, either extended or direct. Cesar does the opposite, leaving his wife and children.

However, the charisma of the paternalistic ideal is strong. Galena’s tone in the narratives about her father is not one of anger or sadness, but of acceptance and even forgiveness. The family has long since given up trying to justify Cesar’s actions. In fact, Galena is explicit about her “love” for her father: “But I loved my *papá*, despite all of his errors, despite everything he did to make us suffer, I loved my *papá* very much.”⁵⁴

Galena’s affirmation of her love for her father could be understood as a reflection of the hierarchical oppression of women in Ecuadorian society. In fact, Jacky, Galena’s daughter, invokes *machismo* as an explanation for the power of the father in Ecuadorian families. However, I prefer to see Galena’s comments as evidence of the power of aspirations to an ideal paternalism, represented for Galena by her uncle. The meaning of Diego’s symbolic fatherhood is deepened when considered alongside Cesar’s treatment of his family.

In fact, the ideal trope of paternalism might be so strong as to impel a woman into the position of “paternal” icon. Jacky is already well recognized as a central family organizer, an individual who mobilizes the Mendozas and coordinates many of the family events. However, especially interesting is her overt desire to establish a family business. During the final few weeks of my field work in 2005, I spoke with Jacky on

several occasions. When the topic of a family business came up in our conversations, Jacky's voice intensified. Excitedly, she explained to me the possibilities of such an enterprise, the potential for everyone in the family to have a job, for everyone to earn an income. Most importantly, she said, "the family could be together."⁵⁵ Interestingly, Jacky has already taken a few small steps towards something like a joint familial economic endeavor. She works as an accountant with her sister Dora and Esther, the wife of her nephew (the son of Gertrudes); their office is directly below Galena's apartment in La Tola. Moreover, Jacky was integral in the formation of a family credit cooperative. Like Diego before her, Jacky values what she sees as the familial benefits of entrepreneurship. While it is not a necessary feature of the trope of paternalism, entrepreneurship has been an important one in the narrative history of the Mendoza family. Although she doesn't invoke him specifically, it's clear that Jacky's notions of a familial web of support are at least partially shaped by her knowledge of her great uncle's family business. Jacky's dream of a family business is a narrative projection into the future, but one that is structured by her understanding of the past.

Jacky's conception of a family business is slightly different from Diego's; she sees it as one of equality – that is, everyone puts in a share, and everyone receives equal benefits. This vision of equality also animates narratives of sharing and cooperation among the family members of her generation. Jacky explains that in a normal, day-to-day context, the family operates under a "quota" system: "a quota is set and everyone puts in, one may have more or another less, because in fact my first three sisters have always had a better position ... but if we were going for a ride to the coast, we would

put in exactly equal [amounts].”⁵⁶ The defining feature of such a system is its reciprocal nature. Notions of reciprocity emerge in the trope of paternalism – especially in the description of the relationship between mother and child – but it is also present in stories of *préstamos* (loans) among the younger generations.

I only heard family members speak of “loans” in regard to relationships between siblings of the younger generations of the Mendoza family. Pau in particular related to me a story in which he borrowed money from his older brother Javy to pay for a new computer. Pau had just graduated and was starting to work as a graphic designer; Javy lent him the money to buy a new laptop with the understanding, Pau says, that Pau would pay him back over time. This kind of relationship agrees with Mauss’ notion of the reciprocal gift (1990): Pau must at some point in the future repay his brother. However, because of the closeness of their familial relationship, that time is pushed further and further back. However, Pau explained to me that, in a sense, he has been repaying his brother at least partly by caring for his brother’s daughter. Interestingly, I heard Valentina (Pau’s mother) compare her strong relationship of *cariño* with her uncle Domingo to Pau’s relationship with Natalia Alicia, his niece and goddaughter. However, from what Pau tells me, at least part of his relationship with Natalia is structured by an economic logic, in that he is providing labor to his brother.⁵⁷ Thus, “loans” for the Mendoza family work similarly to Mauss’ system of giving, receiving, and reciprocating.

Finally, there seems to be a special conception of family that surrounds “crisis” situations, a trope which relates directly to discourses of *ayuda* (help). There are quite a

few stories that recount episodes of family help, and they often reflect the kind of emotion Galena displayed when telling me about the *cariño* she shared with her daughters. For example, Gertrudes, after separating from her husband, was hit hard economically after Ecuador's adoption of the US dollar. She tells of the help her family offered: "Now, thanks to my sister Elenita and my niece who asked me to care for the little ones, I'm moving forward. They helped me a great deal."⁵⁸ In another conversation, Gertrudes told me a story about the help she received from her sister Evita: her voice shaking, tears in her eyes, she told me that "... she was putting in [contributing] and she didn't leave me to lose the house, and for that I have to thank her."⁵⁹ Immediately, Gertrudes is interrupted by her sisters. "Forget about that already. Don't cry,"⁶⁰ exclaims Dora. Valentina and Jacky speak over one another: "Really, all of us wanted to help you ... What's more, Gertrudes also gave a hand to all of us in whatever moment."⁶¹ Everyone agrees that what happened to Gertrudes, "happens to everyone."⁶² In this situation, Gertrudes was not necessarily expected to pay her sisters back directly. Unlike Pau, Gertrudes does not refer to this kind of exchange as a "loan," but instead, deems it "help." She clearly feels indebted to her family, but they respond by asserting an interesting rhetoric of inevitability. "That happens to everyone," they say. This rhetoric connects with a system of circulating *ayuda* in this generation of the Mendoza family, summarized succinctly by Dora: "... he who is able, has to do",⁶³ or in other words, the individual who has the ability will help those in need. The result is a cycle of revolving *ayuda*: while the initial recipient need not repay such *ayuda* directly or completely, there is a sense that once "helped" (that is, once back on one's feet) one

should be prepared to help others in need. Gertrudes helped her sisters as children, by providing them with school supplies from Diego's bookstore, uniforms, and a motherly care; later in her life, her *cariño* is "repaid" by them. Thus, Dora explains, "Because if I had been in the situation [that Gertrudes was in] and someone in my family had been able to help me, I know that he/she would have helped me."⁶⁴

All of these tropes are subsumed by the dominant trope of *cariño* and the conception of familial relationships as exchange relationships. In other words, all of them index a collapsed economic-affective rationality. Moreover, these tropes shape individual behavior as family members strive to meet these ideals. The trope of paternalism – the care and support a father provides for his vertical and horizontal kin – appears to be the foremost ideal, and thus commands the most consideration from family members (especially men). It is supplemented by these additional conceptions of familial interaction (above). However, despite its prominence, the ideal trope of paternalism is still subject to negotiation and change.

Conversational Narrative :: Group Troping

Cariño, *apoyo*, paternalism and all the varied tropes of the Mendoza family are constructions of ideal family relationships and behavior. They reflect and shape economic and affective logics, but they are not monolithic. The narrative Galena tells about Diego is a single construction of fatherhood – one I have termed paternalism – but there are others: the self-made man, for example, as well as tropes that might result in the maintenance of a web of support that do not relate to fatherhood. There are even tropes that represent family fears of a father who abandons his family. Because such

tropic constructions represent more than descriptions of the present, but are also very real aspirations to the future, they can oppose one another and compete for authority. The arena for their manufacture and contestation is the conversational narrative – that matrix of incomplete, intersecting, and overlapping stories. Conversational narratives are not merely the medium for familial tropes – they are in fact the scaffolding on which tropes are elaborated and the vehicle by which they are changed over time. The conceptual family is discursively embodied and debated in conversational narratives.

Ideal family roles and relationships – as well as the behavior shaped by these ideals – are not fixed by timeless traditions. While tropes like the paternalistic ideal are indeed normative models in that they suggest or even command a certain mode of behavior, they are also “always-already” subject to change. Members of the Mendoza family are not mouthpieces for rigid, predetermined cultural rules, just as they do not always follow economic “rationality.” Instead, through the construction and contestation of conversational narratives, individuals can assert their agency.⁶⁵ This, of course, has much to do with the form of the conversational narrative genre, as outlined by Norrick (1997, 1998, 2000, 2005). The potential for change within and between narratives is most prominent, he explains, “in cases of polyphonic narration in natural conversation, where no single participant can control the course of the narrative, and multiple voices vie for the right to formulate the point of the story” (1998: 77). The co-narrative and polyphonic nature of conversational narratives allow for multiple voices, sub-conversations, and individual contestation, as well as the emergence of multiple familial ideals from one performance. Moreover, because of their long-term emergent

quality, family members can debate conceptions of the ideal family *obliquely*, referring to unspoken narratives that reflect competing tropes.⁶⁶

Tropes of the ideal family change constantly because they are constantly debated in conversational narrative, even if the debate is indirect. However, the dynamism and instability of any one narrative makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the researcher to isolate it. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that single manifestations of narratives can often refer to multiple tropes. Preferably, I would present them as they emerged for me and as they do for the Mendozas: interwoven, interdependent, fluid, lively, flexible, variable, co-conditional and contingent conceptual blueprints that frame and shape thought and behavior. However, such a presentation would be difficult – if not impossible – so I will turn instead to a discussion of a narrative that is unusually homogenous (in the sense that family members for the most part stay on topic) and bounded. That said, as I hope to point out, even this narrative – and the tropes it constructs and debates – refers to and implies other narratives, some of which are brought up directly, and some of which go unspoken. In the end, this narrative is an example of the kind of contestation of familial ideal tropes that customarily occurs in Mendoza family conversations.

I usually visited Galena after lunch. We would sit in her small but comfortable living room, sometimes accompanied by one of her daughters – Gertrudes, who lives with her, or, when she made the trip to La Tola with me, Valentina – chatting about the family. Late in the afternoon, other family members might begin to show up. Jacky and Dora would ascend from their offices below the apartment. Francisco, Jacky's husband,

would come to pick up his wife and stay to talk. Various grandchildren and great-grandchildren would come to visit with Galena, who would prepare hot water for coffee and offer everyone a small snack, usually fresh bread from the bakery down the street. The apartment quickly became a hub of familial interaction. This nodal space teemed with narratives.

I happen to be visiting with Galena on one particularly busy day when someone raises the subject of marriage (and in particular secret weddings). With my recorder still on and conversation swirling around us, Galena leans in and begins to tell me a story about the marriage of her youngest daughter Jacky. She explains that the day of Jacky's eighteenth birthday she was shopping for a meal she had planned for the birthday celebration. She was stopped by a friend of the family who asked her what she was doing there at the market since, at that very instant, her daughter was getting married. Galena rushed home and began to call Jacky's siblings to try to find someone who could tell her where Jacky was and if she was indeed getting married.

Upon returning home and finding that Jacky's license and birth certificate were gone, Galena made her way to the home of Gertrudes, who at the time was living several streets up the hill. There they came upon Jacky and Valentina, who lived just a few blocks further on. Galena maintains that Valentina told her that Jacky was merely eating a birthday lunch at her house, the implication being of course that Valentina *knew* about the wedding, but declined to inform Galena.

"No, no," Valentina interrupts. "I didn't know. Yes, I was preparing a lunch for her [Jacky], but I didn't know."⁶⁷

In any case, a relieved Galena gives Jacky permission to eat lunch at Valentina's house. However, Galena says, after they left, "Gertrudes again puts me in doubt and tells me 'Mamá, Tina smelled like wine. Put on your coat, let's go and see.' We go to Tinita's house and from the very entrance I hear them say, 'Long live the bride and groom!'"⁶⁸

With their attentions suddenly focused on Galena's performance, the daughters begin to question who knew about the secret marriage. Those present submit their own experiences. Dora and Gertrudes want to know if Valentina indeed knew nothing about the wedding. Jacky says that no one knew except for Dora, who went with her and her fiancé Francisco to the city office where they signed the paperwork. Dora says that she didn't find out until that day, but that she thought Valentina knew beforehand.

"Okay, here I have to talk," Valentina tries to explain her situation.

... I had made a soup of noodles. She [Jacky] wanted a special food [for her birthday]. Jacky arrives and says, 'You know what? I just got married.' She came, I believe, with Dorita. This happens and I tell them that I have here the noodle soup ... So they say, "Let's go buy some chickens in your car." And Francisco [Jacky's husband] brought a bottle of champagne ... So, with all these things, sure enough they [Galena and Gertrudes] saw Jacky who was with me and they must have supposed that I accompanied her and knew and wanted her to get married ... But it wasn't like that because Jackycita arrived at the house already married.⁶⁹

More importantly, Jacky interjects, "*the decision was made. No one could do anything.*"⁷⁰

When a narrative is debated in conversation, as Jacky's wedding narrative is, it transforms into a negotiation of past and present tropic conceptions of family roles and relationships. As discussed earlier, the conversational narrative is a highly flexible genre of folklore. Sometimes, it occurs tangentially to the primary thread of

conversation, merely referred to offhandedly. Sometimes, the narrative takes center stage in the conversation, and becomes an arena for conflicting memories and viewpoints. In this case, the performance is short, but highly suggestive of a much longer narrative. Moreover, it hails the other family members present to recount their own narratives. Despite the fact that I am interviewing Galena, those around us have no problem interrupting or chatting in the background, stating their own opinions, or telling related stories. In the Mendoza family, when someone tells a story, it is automatically open to critique, correction, or elaboration. Galena relates a story of Jacky's marriage, and it is immediately seized by "audience members" (what Norrick would call "co-narrators") for further explanation. Valentina and others dispute details of Galena's telling, and also (although this is not included in the edited version above) add their own stories to the mix.

Other unspoken narratives, known by all the family members present, shape the reception of this narrative's re-telling. In an earlier interview, Galena told me that her own marriage was a painful experience. She was married by the time she was fourteen to a 36-year-old man in what was never a matter of choice. Galena also told me that she "suffered" when each of her daughters left to get married, an idea reiterated by the co-narrators, who tell me and each other about Galena's reaction to their own marriages. It is clear that Jacky's marriage must have been especially painful for Galena, because of Galena's past experiences, because Jacky is Galena's youngest daughter – the last to be married – and because Jacky had been planning her wedding in secret.

Marriage means something different for Galena and her daughter Jacky. When

Jacky interjects to explain that her decision was made before Valentina knew, she does more than add some personal color or defend her older sister. She enters into a debate about the role of the family in the institution of marriage. Jacky asserts an individual's autonomous control (specifically her own) over important life decisions, like the choice of a spouse. We could draw conclusions from this example about marriage in Ecuadorian society, and there might even exist an important connection to Ecuadorian family structure, but what is important here is the negotiation itself and the way in which it transpires. There is no argument. Jacky and Galena do not even address each other directly. The narrative furnishes an arena where Jacky and Galena can subtly dispute the concept of family and generational differences can work themselves out. The co-narration and polyphonic performance of the narrative of Jacky's wedding allow for the contestation of a trope of marriage in which the parents assume ultimate responsibility. In this contestation, a new trope arises. This is the manner in which idealized tropic conceptions of the Mendoza family are constructed, reconstructed, challenged, affirmed, disputed, and transformed. In other words, family members play with their tropic reality – narrative conceptions of family relationships – by playing off one another and other narratives, voiced or unvoiced. They work collectively – sometimes competing, sometimes cooperating – to transform the “family” and shape their own behavior within the family. In this sense, conversational narratives can be seen as group troping.

Conclusion

Family members do not separate economic and familial logics, but must always consider both simultaneously. Tropes of the family structure this decision-making process, but this does not mean that decisions in the Mendoza family are wholly or even primarily symbolic ordeals. When I invoke the terminology of tropes, I want to de-emphasize its metaphoric connotations, and instead argue that these tropes are themselves materially, culturally, and historically determined conceptual apparatuses. They are thus also necessarily dynamic entities, undergoing constant negotiation by individual subjective agents – the family members themselves – and by exogenous factors. When tropes of the family change, the very yardsticks by which family members measure their decisions – economic and affective – also change.

This paper has I hope provided a basic overview of the trope structure of Mendoza family identity, highlighting the dominant trope of *cariño* (and its analogue *apoyo*) and the ideal but changing roles of father figures in the family. However, I have a few concerns that I would like to address. First of all, the primary storytellers of the conversational narratives I managed to record are women: Galena, Valentina, Jacky, Gertrudes, and the other sisters. This is partly a result of my practices during fieldwork (interviewing during the daytime, when many men were working), but also partly because women are socially situated as “carriers” and “propagators” of culture.⁷¹ While this female discourse is supplemented by male perspectives (especially that of Pau), I feel that this analysis suffers, first because of the omission of the voices of the paternal icons themselves, and second because it does not explicitly consider the influence of the

gender of the storytellers. It is women, and specifically mothers, who are constructing and negotiating these ideal tropes. Thus, the paternalism embodied by Diego is a maternal aspiration to this conception of fatherhood.

Secondly, I have neglected to take into account the idealized conception of motherhood in the Mendoza family. This is, as I have indicated in the endnotes, a somewhat arbitrary decision, but it is also a consequence of the proliferation of narratives surrounding fathers in Mendoza family conversational discourse.

Nonetheless, family members also stressed the significance of mothers, sometimes even maintaining that the mother is a more important familial figure than the father. Thus, a similar analysis of the tropes of maternalism would be a noteworthy task, and an important complement to this work.

Additionally, my experience and perspective is limited to one middle-class *mestizo* family in Quito. I have suspicions about the importance of this middle-class identity in the class and racial hierarchies of Quiteño and Ecuadorian society. However, I have chosen to focus on the inner workings of the Mendoza family conceptual framework, and not to connect this “local” framework – and its attendant tropes of family – to larger national or global scales. The clear next step in a project like this one is to understand the imbrications of nationality, religion, and race (for example) and the Mendozas’ aspirations to specific conceptions of the idealized family. However, this project provides a blueprint for understanding the agency of individual family members in the face of dominant, hegemonic forces. I often find myself trapped between privileging such hegemonic forces or asserting total individual autonomy. In

the Mendoza family, agency is found in the interstice between these two, negotiated in conversation.

Finally, the examples I have chosen to highlight in this paper are generally harmonious. Except for the veiled debate in the narrative of Jacky's wedding and perhaps discussion surrounding the shifting ideals of paternalism, the narratives and tropes of family included in this paper do not showcase conflict. This does not mean that conflict does not exist. I hope I have stressed its potential in the open, multivocal, and dynamic form of conversational narratives. There is always the possibility for incompatible visions of family to collide. Indeed, it is only through such collisions that familial tropes change. In other words, family members do not only reiteratively perform their conceptions of familial ideals through conversational narratives; they also actively debate and change those conceptions. Out of this conversational contestation emerge negotiated family histories, presents, and futures. To invoke Tannen again, the capability of such stories to make and remake realities for the Mendozas – *this* is the magical power of conversation.

Figures

Figure 1. The Mendoza family: generations I-IV, Santiago's (IV-4) offspring (V-VII).

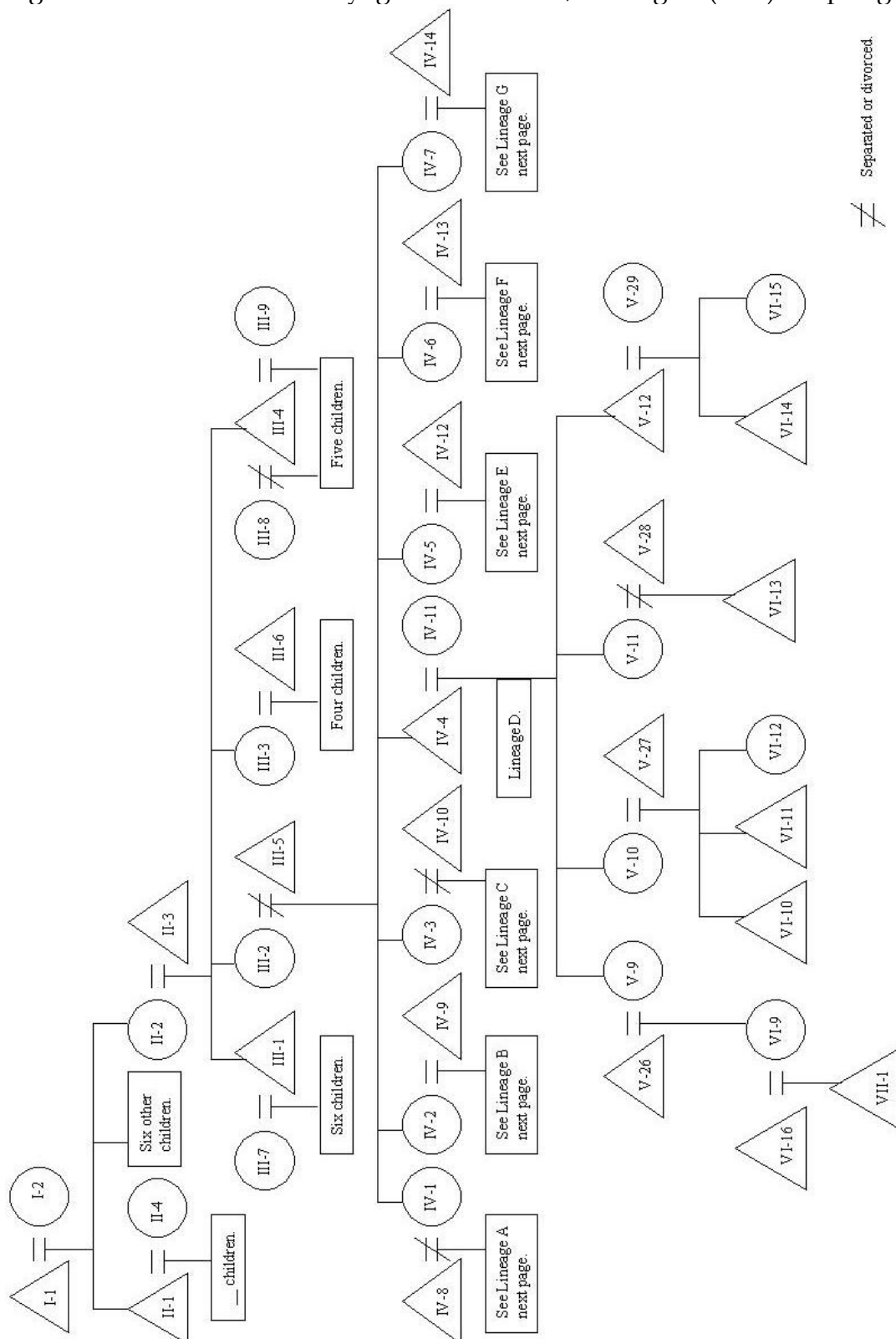


Figure 2. The Mendoza family: generations IV-VI.

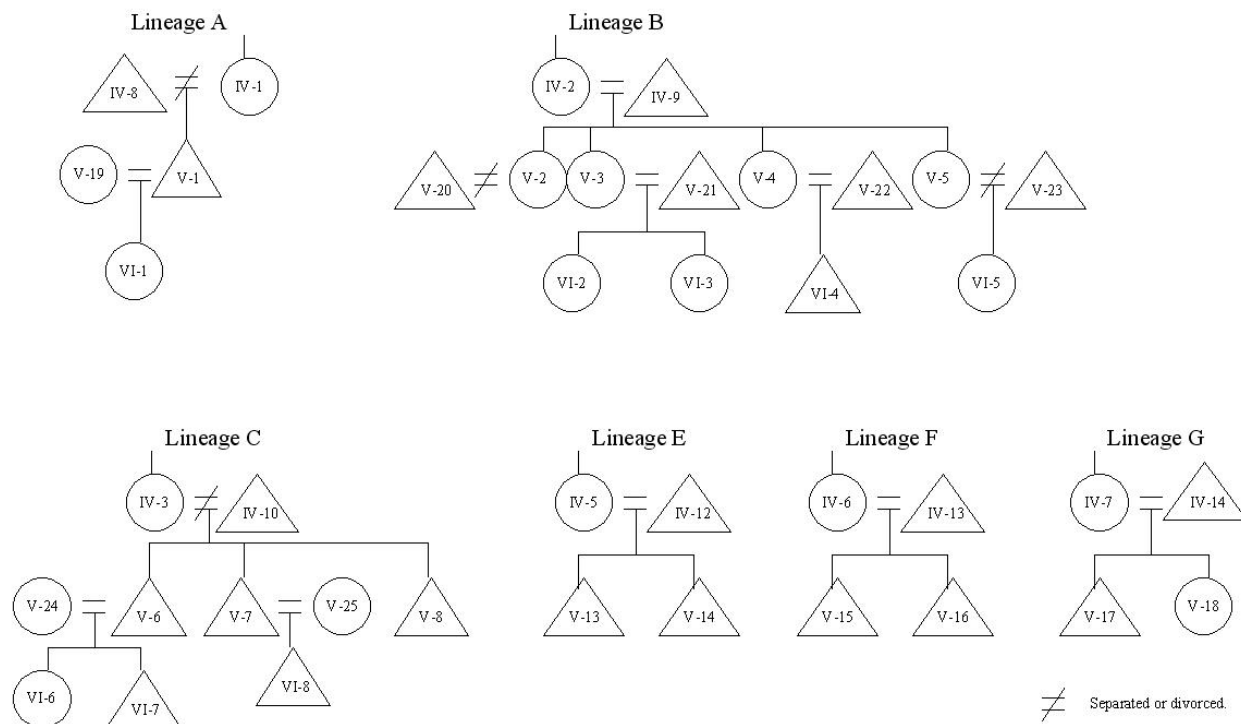


Figure 3. Paternal icons: Diego (II-1), Domingo (III-1), Santiago (IV-4).

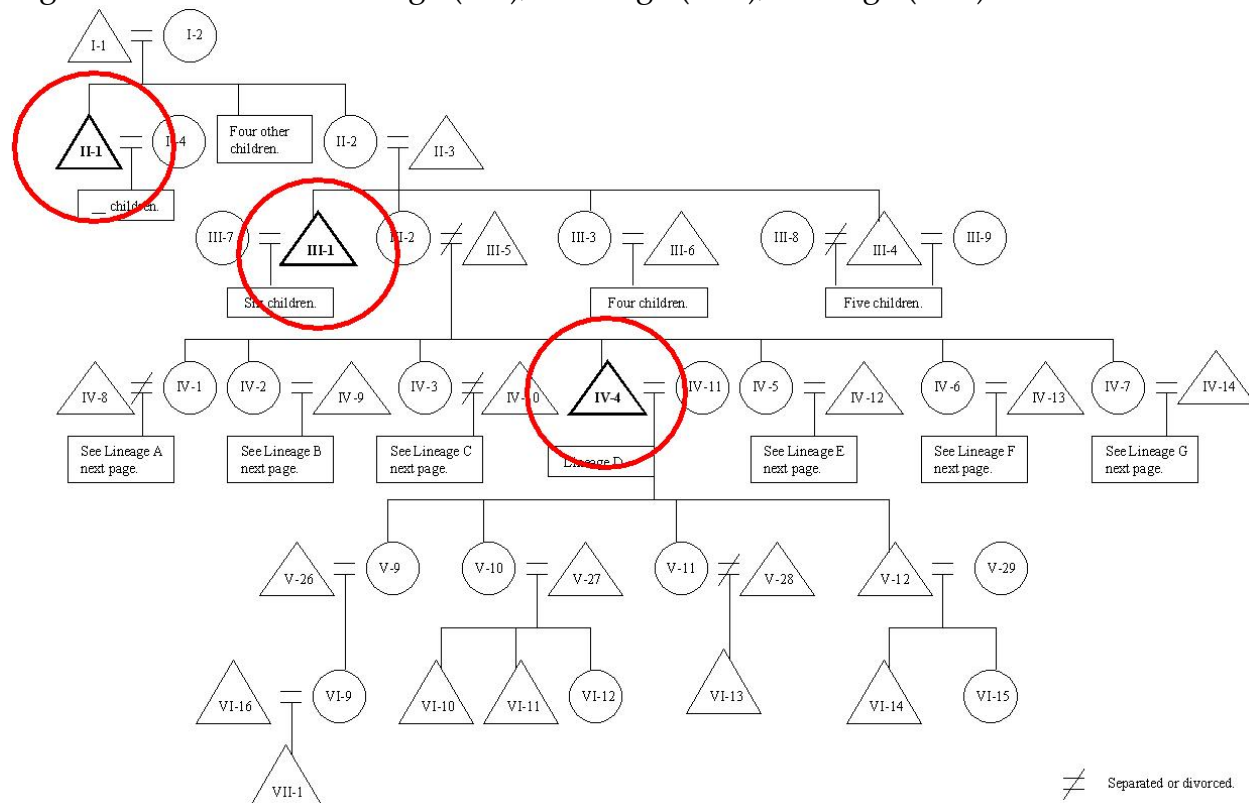
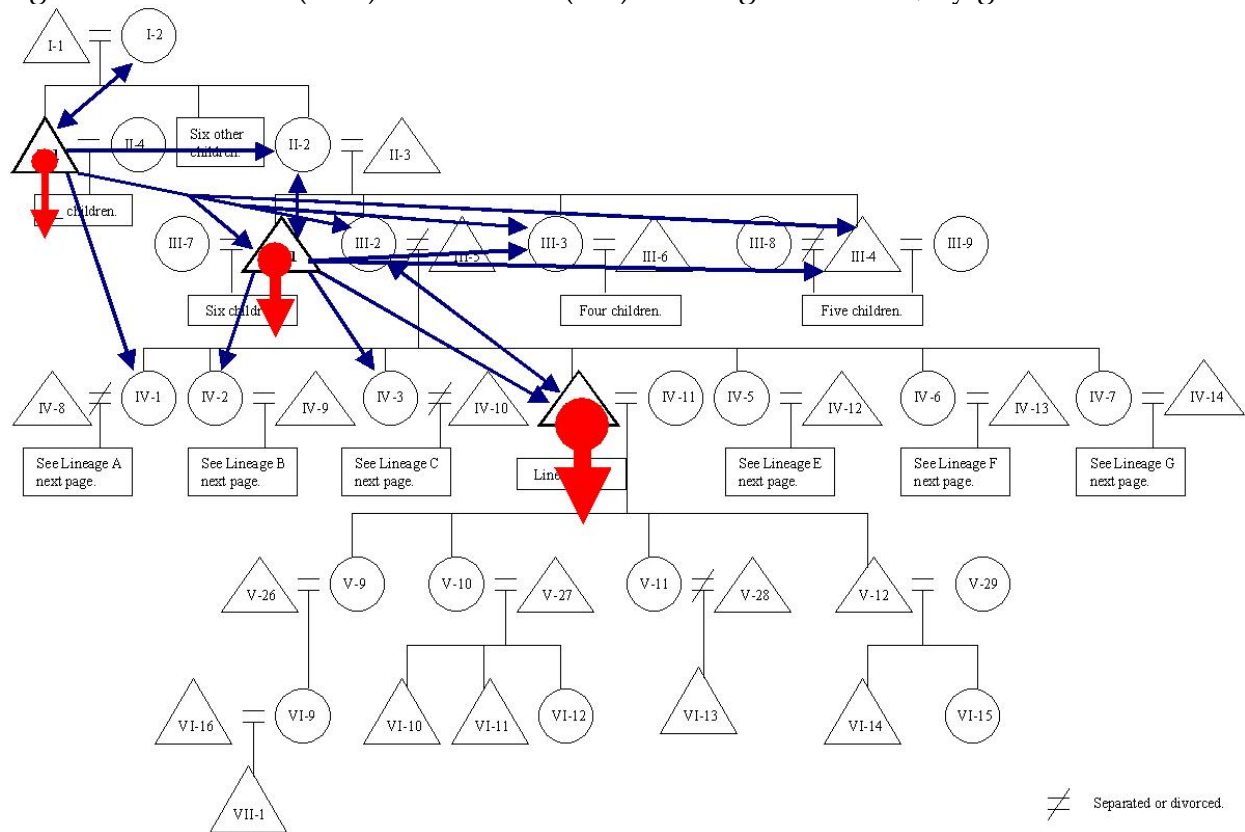


Figure 4. Horizontal (blue) and vertical (red) exchanges of cariño, by generation.



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Notes

¹ Quito was the first city in the world to be named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1978.

² All names are pseudonyms.

³ Domingo, Galena, and Elisa are still living today. Galena is eighty years old, and a great-great grandmother.

⁴ These narratives, of course, continue to emerge for the Mendozas, and even for me, as I read their transcriptions again and again. I want to emphasize the constant reconstruction of these narratives, and thus their dynamic character.

⁵ *"No te entiendo. ¿Qué es la relación entre mi trabajo y la familia? Yo trabajo porque necesito trabajar, necesito el dinero ... necesito sentirme productivo, per no más."*

⁶ In the end, Wilk and Netting's proposition to study "morphology" and "activity" is in fact a call to understand the household/family in functional terms, and consequently the problems with this treatment of the household are the problems inherent in all functional explanations: it is circular in its logic and ahistorical. Household activities/functions are derived from examinations of existing households, which are then used to elucidate the terms and purpose of their existence. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, time is exogenous to a functional model. Households can only be defined in terms of activities fixed in the present. Furthermore, functional explanations firmly transfer the focus from "the means" to "the ends," so that it matters less *why* people do what they do than the actual doing of it. In short, to continue to sweep a well-swept theoretical corner in order merely to account for the fulfillment of social roles does not explain how a cultural institution originated or why it is what it is.

⁷ This simplification extends even to Bourdieu's (1972) classic, in which the family, curiously devoid of humans, is reduced to kinship relations defined by economic determinacy.

⁸ *"... a mi no me ha importado no tener dinero pero ha sido mi familia la que me ha llenado."*

⁹ *"Mami, usted nos ha regalado tanto."*

¹⁰ *"Mira. Mira lo que mis hijos me han regalado. Mira como me ayudan, como me cuidan."*

¹¹ Cariño is an emic conception that I am using etically. I hope it refocuses attention from economic vs. affective (or what arose in the 1990s as the "anthropology of sentiment") to the work done by conceptual frameworks.

¹² The "cariño" to which I refer here and throughout evokes a fairly strong, but nearly exclusively familial, emotional attachment. Another possible translation possesses a less intense connotation, something along the lines of "TLC" in English. Thanks to William Durham for pointing this out.

¹³ *Regalar* usually implies the offering of a present. *Dar*, carries no such connotation and is use more generally.

¹⁴ *"Todos comparten, se ve que entre todos hay cariño. Hay comprensión porque en todas partes hay desavenencias momentáneas, pero se superan. Cuando hay cariño se supera todo."*

¹⁵ *"Yo creo que la familia es apoyo ..."*

¹⁶ See pages 38-41 for the different forms cariño can take in relationships of paternalism.

¹⁷ See pages 41-45 and 50-56 for how family members can also seek to change this, and other, ideal tropes.

¹⁸ I have chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, to focus on tropes of the father *as an example* of the work tropes do and how they can change. A similar analysis might very well have centered on maternal care instead of paternalism. That said, it is clear that the father plays an important role in the Latin American family, and fathers are primary players in Mendoza family stories. See also page 58.

¹⁹ *"Profesor," "ingeniero,"* and *"doctor"* (professor, engineer, and doctor) all seem to serve the same purpose, as titles for an educated or professional person.

²⁰ Galena told this story to me several times. During one telling, she pointed out a mysterious and possibly fateful coincidence. Diego Nicolás died on *Viernes Santos* (Good Friday), during March (the 3rd month), at 3pm in the afternoon at the age of 33, the age at which, she tells me, Jesus Christ was crucified.

²¹ The hacienda has great symbolic and historical importance throughout South and Central America (and especially in the Andes), specifically in regard to issues of race and gender, as well as economic and political power. See Weismantel 2001: 154-159, 200-201, 22-224.

²² *"... él también siguió las mismas ideas de mi abuelito y trató de superarse ..."*

²³ It is also important to point out that there is a clear emphasis on educational achievement in stories about Diego, Domingo, and Ignacio.

²⁴ *"Quien le ayudó bastante era mi tío Diego Lopez. El le ayudó. Entonces, nosotros éramos cuatros hijos, pero al tener el cuarto hijo mi mamcita, mi tío le dijo que ya no trabajara porque tenía que atender a su familia ... tenía su mensual seguro, él nos daba. Nosotros para educarnos por ejemplo, yo la primaria hasta segundo curso de secundaria en el cual yo me casé, mi tío Diego nos daba los útiles, nos daba lo necesario. A mi ñaño también."*

²⁵ *"A todos le dio. Le remuneró una casa a cada de mis tíos y de mis tías también. No logró hacer esto con mi mamcita."*

²⁶ *"... gracias a mi tío, hemos logrado sobrevivir ..."*

²⁷ *"Entonces él asumió el puesto de un padre para la familia."*

²⁸ *"A mi hermano le quiso mucho él, le admiraba las composiciones que él hacía. Incluso a él le invitaba para que toque su guitarra en los conciertos en su casa [la casa de Diego]."*

²⁹ *Galena: "... sigue ahí la música. Entonces, porque esa era la afición de él y ahí se graduó. Jovencito se graduó."*

³⁰ *"... con la ayuda de mi tío Diego [mi madre] sobrevivió y después [de su muerte] con la ayuda también de mis hermanos."*

³¹ *"Como le digo, hasta cuando mis hijas eran niñas y no tenían como aportar para mis enfermedades ... [Domingo me dió] todo, mi hermano. Mi hermano Dominguito me ayudaba en las operaciones."*

³² *"Yo de mi esposo nunca tuve una sola pastilla. Como decirle, para una curación mía... No, nunca. Fue mi hermano, mi hermano."*

³³ *"Pienso que Domingo fue la figura paterna y Ignacio fue como un hermano mayor para mi madre y sus hermanos. Aunque los dos fueron muy buenos y apoyaron a la familia, también había una diferencia de edad de casi 12 años entre los dos. así Domingo pudo ser una figura paternal más que Ignacio. También pienso esto porque mi madre cuenta que Domingo los apoyaba con la educación y la comida, pero era Ignacio quién les compraba los helados y dulces, o les llevaba a pasear en su auto ... es decir, las cosas divertidas."*

³⁴ However, I also think this could be a result of Ignacio's untimely death at the young age of forty-eight.

³⁵ *"... era como un segundo padre [para mi], en tanto y en cuanto. ... Yo recuerdo de niña que era muy querida de él."*

³⁶ There has been extensive research on the institution of godparenthood (*compadrazgo*) in Latin America and the Philippines. See Foster 1953, 1969; Mintz and Wolf 1950; Nutini and Bell 1980.

³⁷ TN: *"Entonces, ¿La relación entre usted y Domingo fue una relación clara de cariño, de amor?"*

Valentina: *"De cariño, especialmente, si. Porque mi tío me tenía especial cariño."*

TN: *"¿Cómo sabía [que tenía] este cariño?"*

Valentina: *"Yo sabía. Yo sentía este cariño. Y yo de niña tenía mucho miedo a mi padre. Entonces, yo sentía que más cariño paternal recibía de mi tío porque mi padre trabajaba lejos, posiblemente, y mi tío estaba más cerca y como era su sobrina, no me reprendía sino solo me daba cariño y cuando podía también era muy generoso. Recuerdas que Gladycita conversó que él nos daba para un cine, para ir al circo. Mi tío que ya falleció nos llevaba de paseo [en su coche]. Mi tío Domingo, como fue mi padrino, también asumió el rol de segundo padre."*

³⁸ It is important to note that if this were a study of the role of mothers in the Mendoza family, the details of the cariño exchanged would change. In many cases, in maternal narratives, what Westerners would call affective goods, such as advice (especially religious), predominate over "material" or "economic" goods (although food plays a central role). What is significant is that, just as with paternalism, mothers exchange both under the general categories of cariño and apoyo.

³⁹ *"... mi abuela mantenía a mi madre y a mi padre ... cuando estábamos lejos mi abuela enviaba dinero. Mis tíos igual."*

⁴⁰ *"Diego pensó que si Catalina tenía una casa nueva, su esposo la vendería inmediatamente. Así le dió el dinero para un negocio (una tienda), para que ella y sus hijos trabajen. La tienda duró algunos años, y fue un buen negocio ... al final de cada año Catalina dividía todas las ganancias para sus cuatro hijos (Domingo, Ines, Ignacio, y Galena). Y al final la tienda fue vendida para comprar un terreno que se dividió en cuatro partes también, una para cada hijo."*

⁴¹ *"Incluso mi tío Leopoldo le dio trabajo a mi hija, la Gladyscita. Trabajó ahí en la librería y siempre mi tío le distinguía a mi hija (mi hija). Porque cuando le veía por ejemplo, que ella quería barrer la parte de la oficina de donde ella ... él decía, 'Esa no es tu labor hijita, eso le pertenece a la empleada [doméstica].'"*

⁴² *"... mi abuela no daba todo: comida, vivienda ... nunca nos faltó de comer, de vestir ..."*

⁴³ The importance of an emphasis on necessity lies with the family's desire to compromise their pride (and their upper class past) with their humility (and their more middle class present).

⁴⁴ *"Es herencia porque mi abuelito ha sabido tocar el charango, un instrumento que es como la guitarra pero en chiquito. Un tío de él ha sido compositor de música ... Entonces eso heredaron mis hermanos, primeramente mi mamá. Ella tocaba precioso la guitarra y el bandolín. Yo tengo una foto de mi mamá con la guitarrita cuando ha sido de quince años."*

In the middle of this explanation, Galena relates a story about her great uncle Virgilio Lopez, who competed against a great musician nicknamed "El Pollo Ortiz" (The Chicken Ortiz) in the Plaza Grande in the center of Quito. When Virgilio bested El Pollo, the people exclaimed that in the place of the Chicken was a Rooster—Gallo, which is also slang for a sour note.

⁴⁵ *"...mis hermanos heredaron de mi mamá el amor a la música."*

⁴⁶ It isn't clear how accurate these stories are in terms of actual monetary transactions. However, since we are delineating ideal family roles, any sense of the objective truth of these stories is irrelevant.

⁴⁷ *"[Vicente] dirige la empresa, también es el soporte de todas las áreas de sus hijos."*

⁴⁸ I must emphasize that this is not a term used by the Mendoza family. However, I do believe it accurately captures the essence of the general description of Santiago, and Pau's depiction of Diego. Members of the family do however use the term *autoeducado* (self-educated), which comes close to "self-made."

⁴⁹ Interestingly, when I asked Pau several months later to tell me about Diego, his answer was very different: *"La verdad, solo hasta cuando tu entrevistaste a mi abuela, empecé a profundizar en algunos personajes de mi familia como Diego. No lo conocí en persona, claro, pero ahora entiendo que fue un gran apoyo para su hermana Catalina y sus hijos."* ("Truthfully, only when you interviewed my grandmother did I start to think in depth about the various characters in my family like Diego. I didn't know him in person, sure, but now I understand that he was a great support for his sister Catalina and her sons.") Pau offers a vision of Diego as a member of the family transformed by Galena's stories. There is also something to be said here for the influence of the anthropologist—I am now clearly complicit in this conception of family.

⁵⁰ *"Bueno yo lo que te puedo decir es una cosa, que mi marido siempre fue un hombre, más bien dicho siempre será un hombre muy responsable. ... Entonces, él ha sido siempre un hombre muy emprendedor, trabajador y responsable que desde muy jovencito siempre supo lo que es trabajar. Ha ocupado muy buenos cargos porque él ha desempeñado mucho las gerencias en las empresas."*

⁵¹ *"'Tantos, abuelo?' Y él decía, 'No, es que no he contado cuantos hijos tengo, sin cuenta.'" The joke of course turns on the pun between cincuenta, meaning "fifty," and sin cuenta, or "countless."*

⁵² *"Verá, mi padre tenía hijos por donde él iba. ... Era una persona muy simpática, personalmente muy guapo. Pero lo que sucede es que también era codiciado de las mujeres. Y siempre él tuvo hijos por todo lado. A mi donde iba, me decían: 'Soy tu hermana.' O sea, teníamos hermanos por todo lado."*

⁵³ *"Era bígamo, el abuelo."*

⁵⁴ *"Pero yo le quería a mi papá, a pesar de todos sus errores, a pesar de todo lo que por él sufrimos, yo le quería mucho a mi papá."*

⁵⁵ *"... la familia podría ser junta."*

⁵⁶ *"...se hace una cuota y todos ponemos, tenga el uno mas o el otro menos, porque de hecho mis tres primeras hermanas han tenido siempre una posición mayor ... pero si nos íbamos de paseo a la costa, poníamos exactamente igual."*

⁵⁷ It is important to remember that this is not meant to downplay the emotional connection between Pau and his niece. Pau's love for Natalia Alicia is not subordinate to economic decision-making. Instead, following the framework of co-production, these logics emerge simultaneously.

⁵⁸ *"Ahora gracias a mi hermana Elenita y a una sobrina que me pidieron que les cuide a las guaguüitas, estoy saliendo. Me ayudaron mucho."*

⁵⁹ *"...ella estado poniendo y no me dejó que pierda la casa, eso tengo yo que agradecerle."*

⁶⁰ “Ya olvídate de eso. No llores.”

⁶¹ “Realmente todas quisimos ayudarte ... además, también la Gertrudes nos dio en algún momento a todos su mano, pues.”

⁶² “Eso pasa con todos.”

⁶³ “... en su momento, él que puede, tiene que hacer.”

⁶⁴ “Porque si yo hubiera estado en el caso [de Gertrudes] y alguien de mi familia, hubiera podido ayudarme, yo se que me hubiera ayudado.”

⁶⁵ Following from Mahmood 2005, I assume that agency does not have to be conceptualized as resistance in the traditional sense. Instead, members of the Mendoza family –like women in the mosque movement in Cairo studied by Mahmood – often find agency *within* a (possibly hegemonic) structure of norms and values.

⁶⁶ Individual agency is not the only catalyst of tropic change in the Mendoza family. External (sociopolitical, material, cultural, etc.) factors can also play a role, such as the economic limitations placed on father figures after Ecuador’s dollarization (see pages 44-45).

⁶⁷ “No, no, yo no sabía. Sí, estaba preparandole un almuerzo, pero no sabía.”

⁶⁸ “Gladycita me entra en dudas otra vez, y me dice, ‘Mamá Tina olió a vino, póngase el abrigo, vamos a ver.’ Nos vamos a la casa de Tinata y desde la entradita oigo que dicen, ‘¡Vivan los Novios!’”

⁶⁹ “Bueno, aquí tengo que hablar ... Yo había hecho una sopa de fideo. Quería [Jacky] una comida especial. Llega [Jacky] y dice, “¿Sabes qué? Ya me casé.’ Vinó creo con la Dorita. Y pasa esto, y les digo que tengo aquí la sopa de fideo ... Entonces, dicen, ‘En tu carro mismo vamos a comprar unos pollitos. y Francisco trajo una botella de champagne ... Entonces ya con las cosas, seguramente le vieron Jackycita que estaba conmigo y han de haber supuesto que yo le acompañaba y sabía y quería que se case ... Pero no fue así porque Jackycita llegó a la casa casada.”

⁷⁰ “... fue una decisión tomada. No podía hacer nadie nada.”

⁷¹ There is quite a lot of literature on “centralizing women” in Latin American societies: see e.g. Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur 1987.